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VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM GUIDES.

LOAN EXHIBITION OF TAPESTRIES CARPETS AND SILK FABRICS FROM THE MOBILIER NATIONAL PARIS.

JULY TO OCTOBER, 1912.

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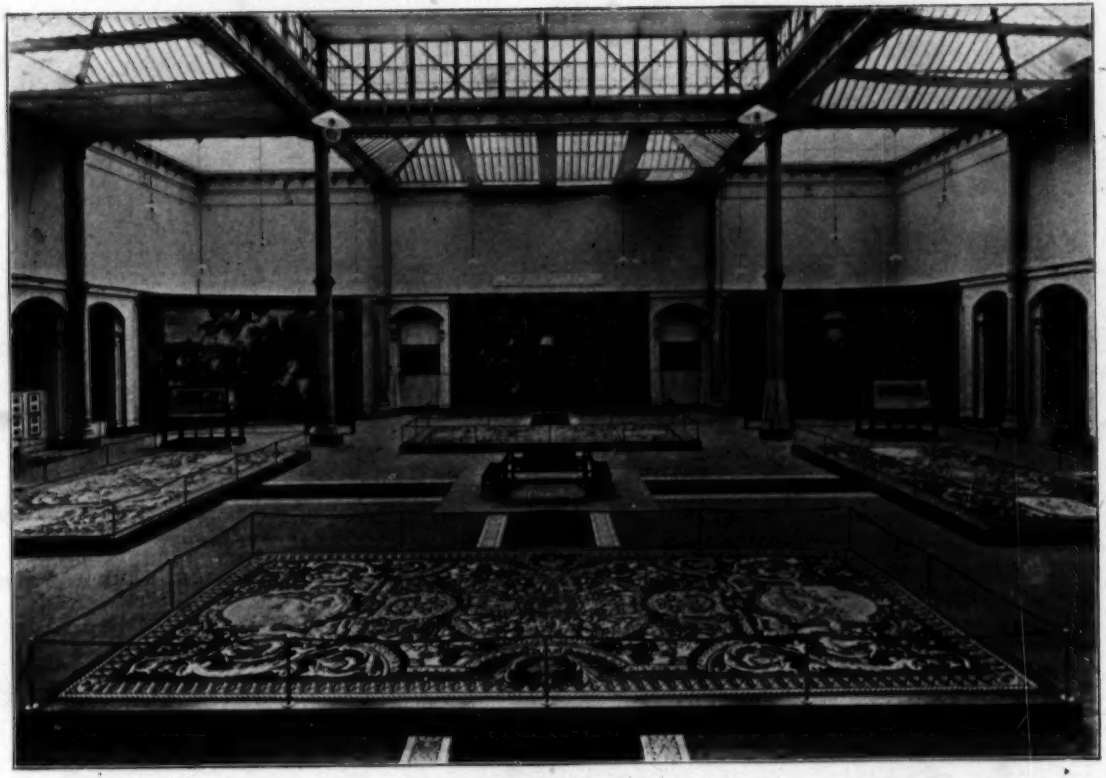

GENERAL VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

From the time of Louis XIV down to the close of the 18th century stores of tapestries, carpets, hangings, and furniture, principally productions of the Royal factories, were brought together at Paris, and accumulated as the Mobilier de la Couronne for use in the Royal Palaces, or for disposal by the Kings of France. Many of these treasures were sent throughout Europe as gifts from the French Court; others were scattered during the troubles of the Revolution; but there still remains a great store of the Mobilier National, as it is now called, in the "Garde Meuble" on the Quai d'Orsay. This constitutes a department of the Ministry of Fine Arts, and is in the charge of Monsieur Dumonthier, who has given the greatest assistance in the formation of this Exhibition.

Many of the tapestries and other objects are exhibited from time to time on loan in the Museums of Paris and the Departments; others are lent for use in the national palaces and public buildings; the rest are carefully stored in the premises of the Garde Meuble. Through the generosity of the French Government and the courtesy of the Administration of the Mobilier National, a selection has been lent for exhibition in this Museum, and an exceptional opportunity is now afforded of seeing in London some of the artistic treasures produced and owned by the French nation.

The loan comprises a series of seven tapestries, woven at the Gobelins factory for King Louis XIV after Raphael's frescoes in the Stanze of the Vatican; four Savonnerie carpets of the second half of the 17th century; and a group of woven silk fabrics and embroideries of the early part of the 19th century. The collection is exhibited in the North Court of the Museum.

July 1912. CECIL SMITH.

TAPESTRIES.

From the 14th to the 16th century tapestry-weaving was practised in Paris and in several provincial districts of France, but it nowhere attained the prosperity and continuity of the great Flemish centres of tapestry production. During this period, moreover, it is probable that immigrant Flemish weavers were largely responsible for the work carried out in France.

In the year 1535 a tapestry factory was established by Francis I. at Fontainebleau, but it lasted only about 30 years, when the weavers were transferred to the Hôpital de la Trinité at Paris. Looms were also set up in other districts of Paris during the later years of the 16th and early part of the 17th century, including the buildings of the Jesuits in the Rue Saint-Antoine, the old Palais des Tournelles, the Faubourg Saint-Marceau and the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

The celebrated Gobelins tapestry works, uniting several of these Parisian factories,* were inaugurated in 1662 by Louis XIV, on the advice of his minister Colbert, and, under the patronage of the Kings of France and their ministers, embarked at once on a career of great prosperity, producing many series of magnificent tapestries. Among the first was a set from Raphael's frescoes† in the Stanze of the Vatican, copied from cartoons painted by students in the French Academy at Rome, then recently founded. The set was a favourite one, and was several times repeated during a period ranging from 1682 until the interruption of the year 1794. The tapestries in this exhibition belong to the earlier sets, having all been woven between the years 1682 and 1714.

The names of three well-known "entrepreneurs" of the early

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* The Gobelins had already been the home of a tapestry factory. The buildings were in the southern part of the city, on the banks of the little river Bièvre; they had previously been occupied by a family named Gobelin, who carried on their occupation of dyers there.

† These celebrated frescoes were painted by Raphael and his pupils for Popes Julius II. and Leo X. early in the 16th century. For convenience of reference, copies of some of the frescoes, painted in oil, have been hung beside the tapestries.

period of the factory are woven into the borders. They are Jean le Febvre (whose activity ranges from the year 1662 to 1700), Jean Jans fils (working from 1668 to 1723), and Jean le Febvre fils (working from 1699 to 1736). The subjects are as follows, beginning with the tapestry on the left of the doorway and continuing in the same direction:—

1. **The Miracle of Bolsena.**—A priest who had doubted the doctrine of Transubstantiation is converted by a miracle. On the right kneels Pope Julius II., attended by two cardinals. The fresco was painted above a doorway; in the tapestry, the space occupied by this doorway is filled by a subject representing the Delivery of the Keys to St. Peter.

2. **The Fire in the Borgo.**—A fire which broke out in this district of Rome, situated near the Vatican, is arrested by the intercession of Pope Leo IV.

3. **The Expulsion of Attila.**—The King of the Huns is stayed from entering Rome through the prayers of Pope Leo I.; St. Peter and St. Paul appear in the heavens to arrest the progress of the barbarian army.

4. **The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple.**—Heliodorus, the treasurer of King Seleucus, is sent to take possession of the Temple treasure at Jerusalem. He is prevented by the apparition of a horse with a terrible rider. The story is told in the second book of Maccabees, ch. iii.

5. **The School of Athens.**—A group of ancient philosophers and men of learning; in the centre, Plato and Aristotle standing, and Diogenes seated on the steps; on the left, Socrates and Alcibiades, Pythagoras, Empedocles and others; on the right, Archimedes, Ptolemy and Zoroaster.

6. **The Battle of Constantine.**—The centre portion of a large scene representing the defeat of Maxentius by the Emperor Constantine at the Milvian bridge (A.D. 312). The Emperor is seen in the middle of the composition on a white horse.

7. **Parnassus.**—An assemblage of celebrated poets of ancient and mediæval times. In the middle are Apollo and the Muses; on the left, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Sappho, Corinna, Petrarch,

Propertius and Ovid; on the right, Pindar, Horace, Callimachus and Boccaccio.* This subject, like that first described, was painted above a doorway; the space is here filled in by the spring Castalia.

The fine architectural borders of these tapestries bear the arms, cypher and devices of King Louis XIV.

CARPETS.

A guild of carpet-makers existed in Paris as early as the 13th century, but no examples of their handiwork are known to exist, and the nature of these early fabrics is matter of conjecture. The pile carpets of the Savonnerie are of a much later origin, and are recognised as among the most important of all European productions designed to imitate the Oriental method of carpet-weaving.

The craftsmen employed were familiar with the carpets of the East, which were first brought into Europe at an early date, and used in considerable numbers as floor-coverings, table-covers, and hangings. Many of these carpets have perished, but some still exist, more especially in the churches and palaces of Italy, and in Museums and private galleries. Perhaps the chief source for our knowledge of these imported carpets is to be found in paintings of the 14th to the 17th centuries, where they are often represented with a faithfulness to existing examples which leaves little doubt that the artists had actual specimens before their eyes.†

The chief characteristic of the Savonnerie carpets was the application of the technical methods used in these Oriental specimens to designs prepared in the contemporary style of French decorative art. Early in the 17th century two craftsmen, Jehan Fortier (in 1601) and Pierre Dupont (in 1605), claimed to be originators of a process of carpet-making, described as being after the manner of Turkey and the Levant, and applied for privileges to carry on the work. Dupont was granted a lodging and workshop in the Louvre in 1605. The origin of the famous Savonnerie works dates from a few years later when, in 1626,

* The identifications of the figures in 5 and 7 are in some cases disputable.
† Several Oriental carpets acquired in Italy are exhibited in this Museum.

Simon Lourdet, a pupil of Dupont's, set up carpet-looms on the banks of the Seine at Chaillot, a suburb of Paris, in buildings originally used as soap-works and afterwards as a "hospice" for poor children, bearing the name of the "hospice de la Savonnerie."* In 1672 the Louvre "atelier" was transferred to the Savonnerie, where important commissions for King Louis XIV were already in progress.

During the 17th and 18th centuries many carpets were made for the Royal Palaces and National Buildings, including the Louvre, Versailles, Fontainebleau and the French Academy in Rome. In the first half of the 18th century a present of Savonnerie carpets was sent by the King of France to the Turkish Sultan. Portières and panels for screens and furniture-coverings were also made by the same process. During the political disturbances of the later years of the 18th century the factory declined, but it recovered a little under the Napoleonic régime.

In 1825, after existing at the Savonnerie for just 200 years, the factory was united with the tapestry works of the Gobelins. In these new quarters the technical processes remained the same, and carpets were made for the palaces of the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Elysée, St. Cloud, Compiègne and Fontainebleau, for the cathedral of Notre Dame, and the church of the Panthéon. Their production is continued at the present day in the national manufactory of the Gobelins.

The four examples in this Exhibition belong to the splendid series of large carpets made for King Louis XIV, whose cypher and emblems they bear. The process by which they are made is similar to that employed in the East, and may be compared to the building up of a mosaic by an arrangement of coloured cubes, these being represented in the carpet by knots or tufts of wool. A number of parallel "warp" threads are first arranged close together on the framework or "loom." Upon these the outline of the pattern is roughly sketched out. The weaver has near at hand the large cartoon shewing the details of the pattern and the colours to be employed. He makes the knots by hand upon the warp threads, the successive rows

* A number of the children were employed to assist in the making of the carpets. The site of the factory is now occupied by the "Manutention Militaire" on the Quai Debilly, near the Place de l'Alma.

being kept in position by "weft" threads interlaced with the warp at right angles during the progress of the work. The pile surface produced by the knots is afterwards cut to an even level.

SILK FABRICS.

During the course of the Middle Ages, the textile fabrics of Italy had gradually superseded in the European market the rich stuffs of Byzantium and the East. This Italian supremacy lasted until the middle of the 17th century, when it began to be seriously challenged by French manufacturers. Already in the 15th and 16th centuries silk stuffs had been woven in considerable quantities at Lyons, Tours and other French towns; but it was not until the 17th century that Lyons weavers, assisted no doubt largely by the introduction, from time to time, of skilled Italian craftsmen, attained that eminence which has made the name of Lyons silks famous throughout Europe for more than 200 years.

The long course of prosperity which thus commenced was interrupted by the wars of the Revolution; but as soon as the first crisis was over, demands for rich stuffs again arose, and the production of sumptuous fabrics, with patterns largely based on ancient Roman models after the fashion of the time, gave employment to vast numbers of weavers. The velvets, brocades, damasks, and embroideries which have been lent for this Exhibition are of this last period and passed direct from the looms and workshops of Lyons into the national store.

The list of the fabrics given below states the names of the weavers, where they are known, and the names of the Palaces for which they were designed.

CASE 1.

Hanging of brocade ("lampas"); floral pattern, with vases and butterflies. Woven by Messrs. Chuard et Cie., in the years 1812–13, for the "Salon des Exercices" of the King of Rome in the Palace of the Tuileries.

Border for the above; floral pattern.

Hanging of brocade ("lampas"); floral pattern, and panels with bees clustering round roses. Woven by Messrs. Sériziat et Cie. in the years 1813–14, for the "Cabinet de repos" of the Emperor Napoleon I. in the Palace of Versailles.

Border for the above hanging; pattern of roses and pansies.

Hanging of green velvet ("velours ciselé"); pattern of vases and formal devices within compartments surrounded by floral stems. Parts of the satin ground were intended to be embroidered in gold. Woven by Messrs. Bissardon, Bony et Cie. in the years 1811–12 for the "Cabinet de repos" of the Empress Marie-Louise in the Palace of Versailles.

Border of the above hanging; floral pattern.

CASE 2.

Hanging, embroidered in colours on white satin. Made from a design by Bony by Messrs. Bissardon, Bony et Cie., in the years 1811-12, for the "Petit Salon" of the Empress Marie-Louise in the Palace of Versailles.

Border for the above hanging; flowers and a butterfly.

Hanging of damask, in colours; formal floral pattern. Woven by Messrs. Séguin et Cie. for the Small Bedchamber of the Emperor Napoleon I. in the Palace of Trianon.

CASE 3.

Border of brocade, in red and gold; floral pattern. Woven by M. C. Pernon, for the "Cabinet de travail" of the First Consul in the Palace of the Tuileries; in 1805 it was used for the "Grand Salon" of the Emperor Napoleon I in the Palace of Saint-Cloud.

Border of brocade in colours and gold; pattern of wreaths and sprays. Woven by M. C. Pernon for the "Salle du Conseil d'État" in the Palace of Saint-Cloud.

Border of brocade, in red and gold, for the hanging with a pattern of oak stems in Case No. 5.

Border of brocade, in red and gold; woven by M. C. Pernon for the "Salle du Conseil d'État" in the Palace of Saint-Cloud and used in the Palace of the Tuileries.

CASE 4.

Border of the blue hanging in Case No. 5; pattern of marguerites.

Border of brocade in colours and gold; pattern of oak and laurel. Woven by M. C. Pernon for the "Salle des Ministres" in the Palace of Compiègne.

Border of red velvet, embroidered in gold; pattern of scrolls and stars. Early 19th century.

Hanging and **Border** of brocade ("lampas") in colours; vases containing lilac-blossom in panels; border of poppies within wreaths. Woven by Messrs. Séguin et Cie. in the year 1813, for the fourth "Petit Salon" of the apartments of the Emperor Napoleon I. in the Palace of Versailles.

Border of brocade in red and gold; pattern of flowers and scrolls. Early 19th century.

CASE 5.

Damask brocade ("satin damassé broché argent") of blue silk and silver; pattern of myrtle and ivy. Woven by M. C. Pernon, in the years 1803–4, for a salon in the Palace of the Tuileries, and afterwards used in the Palace of Saint-Cloud.

Hanging of red velvet; pattern of floral wreaths and stars. Woven by M. C. Pernon, in the years 1804–5, for the bedroom of the Emperor Napoleon I., in the Palace of the Tuileries, and afterwards used in the Palace of Saint-Cloud.

Hanging of brocade ("lampas") in colours; floral pattern. Woven by Messrs. Chuard et Cie, in the year 1813, for the "Premier Salon" of the Empress Marie-Louise in the Palace of Versailles.

Hanging of red damask; pattern of oak stems. Woven by M. C. Pernon, in the year 1805, for the Throne room in the Palace of Saint-Cloud, and afterwards used in the Palace of Trianon.

CASE 6.

Hanging of velvet brocade ("velours ciselé") in blue and gold; pattern of palms and conventional floral ornament. Woven by Messrs. Bissardon, Bony et Cie., in the years 1811–13, for the "Appartement d'Honneur" in the Palace of Versailles; afterwards sent to Italy to decorate the Palais de Milan.

Border for the above hanging; pattern of stars and floral forms.

Hanging of blue brocade ("lampas"); cornucopias and the caduceus as attributes of Commerce; bees (emblem of the Emperor Napoleon I.) in the intervening compartments. Dyed at the Gobelins by the chemist Roard. Woven by Messrs. Grand frères, in the year 1813, for the reception-rooms in the Palace of Versailles.

Border for the above hanging; pattern of flowers.

Hanging of brocade ("lampas"); pattern of carnations, etc., in yellow and white on a blue ground. Woven by Messrs. Séguin et Cie. between the years 1811 and 1813, for the Palace of Versailles, and subsequently used in the "Salon des Fleurs" in the palace of Fontainebleau.

Border for the above hanging; floral pattern.